

OCT 14

"Truth Is One, Men Call It By Various Names." ---RIG VEDA

RELIGION

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Message of the East

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REALISTIC RELIGION

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REGULAR EVENTS

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130 Beechwood St., Cohasset, Massachusetts

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Services: Sun. 11 A.M. and 3:15 P.M.

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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of God of
Israel came from the way of the East."
—Ezekiel

"Light shall come again from the East."
—Tyndall

VOLUME XLII

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I have joined my heart to Thee—
All that exists art Thou.
Thee only have I found
For Thou art all that is.

O Lord, Beloved of my soul,
Thou art the home of all!
Where is the heart in which
Thou dost not dwell?

Thou hast entered every heart,
Whether sage or fool;
Thou makest them as Thou wilt,
All that exists Thou art.

Nothing can compare to Thee—
All that exists art Thou.
All must bow before Thee
For Thou art all that is.

From earth to highest heaven,
From heaven to deepest earth
Thee I see wherever I look.
All that exists art Thou.

Truly I have seen and known,
Truly I am freed of doubt.
Thy presense is everywhere—
All that exists Thou art.

*Adapted from the
Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

All is but lip wisdom which wants experience.

—*Sir Philip Sidney*

Virtue is spotlessness of mind; all else is mere noise.

—*Tiruvalluvar*

Give up what thou hast and then thou wilt receive.

—*From the Greek Mysteries*

The only real heathens and heretics are the purely selfish. It is for our own sakes, as well as theirs, that we desire their conversion. For while they are losing all life has to give, we are losing the share they might contribute.

—*Wilfred E. Grenfell*

Dare to be wise: begin! He who postpones the hour of living rightly is like the rustic who waits for the river to run out before he crosses, yet on it glides, and will glide on forever.

—*Horace*

We acknowledge but one motive—to follow the truth, as we know it, whithersoever it may lead us; but in our heart of hearts we are well assured that the truth which has made us free will in the end make us glad also.

—*Felix Adler*

No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top.

—*Booker T. Washington*

We must discard the materialistic philosophy that the end justifies the means. Means and ends are inseparable. In a timeless sense they form a single path, a "way of life," along which we must travel.

—*Charles A. Lindbergh*

Show not yourself glad at the misfortune of another, though he were your enemy.

—*George Washington*

REALISTIC RELIGION

By Swami Paramananda

Religion always plays a tremendous part in human life. There may be moments when we evade this, when we refuse to recognize the power and influence of religion, but sooner or later we have to acknowledge it; for no matter how much we may receive from the material world or how lasting its bounty may be, it fails in the end to satisfy the hunger that rises from the depth of the soul. Therefore in all nations and in all times men have ever striven through spiritual investigation for the satisfaction that only inward vision can give and, as a result of this striving, organized religions have come into being.

Now, as we study these organized religions, we find two distinct phases; one may be called the dogmatic phase, the other has to do with religious realism. Dogmatic religion is controlled by organization and is based on certain dogmas, doctrines and ceremonies, which also are widely divergent because individuals express their vision in different ways according to temperament and inspiration.

Realistic religion, on the other hand, is largely free of ceremonies, books, rituals, or any kind of outward form. It concerns itself rather with the individual being; with his heart, with his soul, or — as our sages have proclaimed — with inner realization. When man believes in God, not because someone says there is a God, but because he himself knows there is through his own spiritual unfoldment, and when he feels the presence of that God everywhere — then this may be called realistic religion.

We do not find much difference in religions when we concentrate on fundamental principles, but when we deal with rituals and ceremonies we find great differences. We become more and more bound, more and more dependent on outward observances and tend to see divergencies everywhere. That is due to the fact that we deal with the external and all external expressions are divergent. Who can say that men everywhere are alike? Although we are all human beings, our intellectual capacities, our physical strength, our propensities differ according to the individual nature. Thus it is that we become discouraged when we look upon this universe from the outer point of view, and if our observation is superficial, the ideal of universal tolerance will seem to us an impossibility. How, we ask, can all these varying conditions, these different social, moral, spiritual and philosophical ideas merge into one? This question sums up the attitude of those who try to approach the concept of universal brotherhood at the present time.

More than ever before, humanity is moving from one country to another. Travel is opening men's eyes. We see that there is good everywhere, therefore we cannot help but feel that there must be a basis for universal tolerance. But, unfortunately, the methods adopted by many of the reformers and religious teachers have been anything but tolerant. They say: "Give up all that you believe, forget your own ideas and accept what I have to give."

The Vedanta system of India takes a different stand. Vedanta says: "Not so! The true spirit of tolerance is never destructive; the moment we destroy anything, we strike a discordant note and cause the gulf between our-

selves and others to become wider and more difficult to cross." Vedanta believes in the form of tolerance which knows no denunciation, which does not seek to do away with already existing conditions, but which seeks rather to assimilate. We all know people whom we call "broad-minded." That is, they put up with others. They say, "I know that my point of view is absolutely correct and that what you are thinking is wrong, but since I am broad-minded, I shall bear with you." This is their attitude and although it may be an improvement over the purely bigoted point of view, it cannot be called profound or understanding. As long as we look upon others with condescension and carry the spirit of criticism in our hearts, we shall be incapable of expressing true tolerance and universality.

Fortunately, there is a way; the way of oneness. That is, a recognition of that One from whom all manifestation comes forth or, as it is expressed in the *Rig Veda*: *God is One, although men call Him by various names. They worship Him differently, but He is always One!*

How is it then, you may ask, that His children do not recognize His Oneness? It is because the Father of all of us appears before us in different garbs, in different forms, according to our various tendencies and temperaments. Being ourselves divided in consciousness, we are not capable of recognizing Him as the Absolute Spirit; therefore He manifests in various ways to satisfy our needs. Yet, always He remains One — One without a second.

This was the central idea of the Vedic revelation, and to my mind it provides the only basis of tolerance. When we can feel in our hearts, or know by means of an unfolded consciousness, that the same Spirit is manifesting

in many different ways, and that according to our vision we perceive it, we become firmly established in true understanding. It is not that we go from error to truth, but from lower truth to higher truth. It is not that we go from death to life, but from less manifestation of life to higher manifestation of life — to the highest manifestation of all, where there is no death.

This is what Vedanta proclaims. It shows us that religion — no matter how crude, no matter how symbolical, no matter how filled with rituals it may be — is still basically true. Everything has a place in this universe, and the lofty teaching of Vedanta includes all, from the crudest form of philosophy to the highest conception of monism, where all trivialities, all dualities, all forms and rituals vanish as they come face to face with one undivided Spirit.

That undivided Spirit manifests Itself through different channels, however, and unless we are able to recognize the lesser manifestations we become denunciatory and then we cannot help but strike a discordant note. That has been the great drawback in the life of religion. The religious life has been influential in bringing peace and blessedness to countless human beings, also it has often made people into howling fanatics. We may ask, why? Because love can serve destructive as well as constructive ends. The same fire which gives one nourishment, heat and protection can become dangerous in the hands of a child. So it is with the religious life. When it is bound and narrow and distorted it leads to quarrelling and unbrotherliness.

Are we not face to face with that problem at this very hour? There is no lack of religion, but as we observe we find that our religious conception today is more dog-

matic than realistic. That is the reason there is all this disharmony. Realistic religion always produces a harmonious spirit. When we read the Bibles of the world, do we not find that all great religions and great religious teachers have affirmed one great Truth. Each one proclaims: "My God is One, infinite, Almighty, all powerful, all merciful, all pervading." Now, the point is, if all religions make this identical claim, where is there room for denunciation? Can there be more than one Infinite Spirit? Infinite means boundless, secondless, does it not? If that is the claim of all religions, it must mean that they all worship one God, for there cannot be two Gods; two infinite Beings. That would be irrational, illogical. Where, then, lies the misunderstanding? It lies in the fact that we utter these words, but we do not know what they mean. We say: "God is all loving," but we do not truly know love, therefore we reflect non-love. We say that God is all-pervading, but we do not realize His presence, therefore we fall into ungodliness.

My friends, our great need is to make our religious point of view consistent and realistic. Then when we teach, we shall teach a noble tolerance, everywhere the same. Let me share with you a few selections from different sources, widely separated in time and also in country. For instance, Lord Krishna, who lived at least fourteen hundred years before Christ, taught:

He who hates no living creature, who is kind and compassionate to all, who is free from selfish desires and egotism, equal-minded in pleasure and pain, loving and forgiving, he is dear to Me.

Again, we read from the teaching of Gautama Buddha, whose life radiated true love and forgiveness and the spirit of tolerance:

You must so adjust your heart that you long for the welfare of all beings, including the happiness of your enemies. If a man foolishly does me wrong, I will return to him the full protection of my ungrudging love.

When we turn to the Christian Bible, we read these immortal words, spoken by Jesus :

Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you. Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.

Now these sayings, coming from different sources, do they not strike the same note of universality? Do they not tell us what the true religious spirit means; that it is not at all dependent on our ceremonies or how much we pretend, but rather on how much we are able to manifest through our life and action? There is no room in the religious field for actions that are cruel and fanatical, no, not even for unkind thoughts and feelings.

We see how easily people can be carried away through the foolish, superficial acceptance of religion. It is such people who think they are going to prove their devotion by fighting for their faith. But God, Infinite Spirit, does not accept such devotion. He accepts the humble offering. He accepts the flower which grows on the altar of the heart, the flower which gives fragrance always, under all circumstances. We all know the nature of a flower; whether you place it on your head or trample upon it, it continues to shed its perfume. That also is the nature of true love, of true spiritual radiance.

Do we possess that love, that radiance? If we do not, then it does not matter what we profess to be; Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, or any other denomination. Religion is not revealed by names and forms. True religion is a

spiritual unfoldment, an individual growth, and until and unless, as a people, we can manifest that genuine spirit, our whole social structure — what we call civilization — is in danger, because underneath all human progression, true religion stands as the supreme sustaining power. It is as a fountain which gives us strength for our life, and those who have not awakened to this fact are indeed to be pitied.

The Hindu Aryans tried to adjust life on a spiritual basis because they realized that spiritual life is more potent than physical life. When a man has spiritual vision he can easily adjust his physical existence; but the material viewpoint alone leads to disintegration. In other words, when a man has life he can make use of his body, his limbs; but if a man lacks life, though he may have a perfect organism and all his senses intact, they are of no avail to him. Spiritual vision is what we need today. No matter how wonderful our social structure, unless it has the religious touch, unless it includes spiritual perception, it will not bring us completion of life and therefore our actions will always be imperfect. That is why the cry goes out over and over again: "Let us find a basis for tolerance — social, political, national tolerance and, above all, tolerance in religion."

This we can never find, however, until we find it in our individual hearts. As long as our vision is turned outward, we shall see only the differences; but when our vision turns within, then we shall find at the core of our heart That which is the same everywhere and forever. The wonderful saying in the Bible: *Love thy neighbor as thyself*, has been repeated for hundreds of years. You may ask, "Why should I love my neighbor as myself?" The Aryan sages give the explanation. They tell us

that there is no difference between ourself and our neighbor. *Tat twam asi, Swetaketu!* Thou art That, my son! — Thou art thy brother.

When a man can realize that undivided spirit pervading this whole universe, then alone has he found the true note of tolerance: Before that, he may raise his voice, but it is all in vain. We must respect the diversities of life, for in manifested life there must always be diversity. The thing is, our power of assimilation must be so developed, our hearts so expanded that we shall not be influenced by differences. Not destruction, but construction; recognition of good everywhere should be our ideal.

Truth cannot be confined in one little vision. Therein lies our danger. Fanatical people are not wholly wrong and they are generally very sincere, but they see only from one angle and do not recognize any other point of view. Sri Ramakrishna's parable of the chameleon gives a true picture of their difficulty.

Once some friends were wandering in a forest and, being tired, they rested under a tree. After a time, when they were on their way again, one of the men said, "I saw a beautiful red chameleon on a branch of that tree." The second man contradicted him and said, "It was not red. I also saw it and it was yellow." The third man said, "You are both wrong. With my own eyes I saw that it was blue." The fourth laughed at them and exclaimed, "You are all deluded. It was not red, blue or yellow. It was grey!" So they began to dispute and quarrel, each being convinced that he was right and the others were wrong. The trouble was, they did not know the nature of the chameleon.

And that is the trouble with us. We do not know the

nature of the Infinite Spirit who dwells constantly under the tree of Divine Wisdom. Infinite Spirit is sometimes seen as One, and sometimes It manifests in other ways. It has many colors; also It is colorless, inscrutable and unfathomable. But there is no use in our making these broad statements or pretending that we are universal until we have true unfoldment of the heart. For it is in the core of the heart that real universality exists. The Universal Spirit that alone can give us pure, lofty, and unbounded vision is deep hidden within us and until we have found It within we cannot obtain that vision.

The other day, on an expedition to Mt. Tamalpais, as we were walking along to the tower, I heard a little child say to her mother: "Mother can we see California from here?" The mother replied, "My dear, you are in California, you are always seeing California." So with us. We live, move and have our being in Godhead, yet we say, "How far is God? Is it possible for us to see God? Is it possible for us to realize that He is within us and without us; the true, living Existence in the heart of every being?"

We question again and again. We seek in the outer universe without success. Doubt crawls and creeps into us and we are led away by unrealities, for the apparent thing seems to us more real than That which is real and abiding. Under these conditions, what will save us? What will bring the true spirit of understanding? It will come only when we have sufficient intuition, when we are not always looking without, but have learned to cultivate that introspection which reveals our inner being, and leads us into the shrine of our own heart where God abides. For only by knowing Him may we know our relationship with all our brethren.

However, the process of evolution is long and we must take things nearest to us. We must not be too ambitious. We cannot at once jump to the highest point of the mountain, but must ascend gradually, step by step, and we must be willing to take the steps. Recognizing this fact, Vedanta divides its spiritual teaching. Each person must be given a task which accords with his capacity, and the person performing the lesser task is by no means inferior to one who has a greater responsibility. Here is a point we must recognize. People may seem to follow different paths, they may seem to differ from us because their outlook is different, but all roads lead to the same goal. In one of the great Upanishads it is written:

As different streams having their sources in different places mingle their waters in the sea; so, O Lord, the different paths men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.

Until we recognize this, we shall never know tolerance. The more we are aware of the Infinite One, the humbler we become, the more room we leave for others. Socrates recognized that he knew nothing, because he had found that wisdom which no one can fathom.

The *Katha Upanishad* gives us this beautiful verse: *The sun does not shine there, nor the moon, nor the stars; nor do these lightnings shine there, much less this fire. When He shines, everything shines after Him; by His light all is lighted.*

That is the point of view of true seers. They do not confine their religious concept to a few forms or dogmas. Infinite! Infinite! You may express in one way; another person may express in another way. He who is truly spiritual cannot help but embrace all that comes from the Infinite Source. He has the unfoldment. He

denounces no one; yet he remains firm in his own path. That is what we must always do; yet we must allow the same freedom to our fellow beings. That is the pure spirit of Christ, the pure spirit of Buddha. It is the pure spirit of all true seers.

This, my friends, is the essence of Vedanta. That is why India has produced so many spiritual giants, and has recognized the same One manifest in them all. Let us expand our vision; let us take the essential and discard the non-essential, like the swan in the Indian parable. The legend goes that if you put before the swan a cup of milk mixed with water, the swan will drink the milk and throw aside the water. Similarly, in the world of diversity, let us find the pure milk, the true Existence, free from all deluding influence, and drink of that. Otherwise, no matter what our intentions may be, no matter how willing we are to serve humanity, we fail to do so; instead, we often bring evil instead of good, because we have not found the remedy that alone exists in the depths of our own soul.

Thus spiritual vision — first-hand spiritual vision — is the only way to bring about a true spirit of tolerance. First-hand spiritual vision means that you do not accept things merely on hearsay; that you do not believe in God because someone or some book has told you to do so. You believe because you know that He exists, you feel His presence. Brotherhood will become a reality only when we know in the heart of our heart that we are all children of the same Infinite One, and that until we can extend our loving hand to all our fellow beings, we shall not be pleasing our Father who has sent us here. That is the spirit which softens our hearts and unites us in a unity that cannot be broken. The vision of unity

that is born in the soul can never be disturbed or obliterated, no matter what difficulties may confront us or how much misery we may have to go through. He who perceives it becomes free from the bondage of *Karma*. He becomes immortal. Death can no more frighten him. Being blessed, he is able to bless others through his very life and existence.

Universality cannot be found in a society; it does not exist in books, although we may receive much help from books, and inspiration from examples. But if we are really hungry, if we are really desirous to see true peace established among human beings, we must work with all earnestness to remove the barriers from our hearts. God abides within us, and when we see Him within us, then all walls of separation melt away. Do not forget that the Infinite includes everything. Sri Krishna says that we are strung on the Infinite as pearls on a thread. Therefore where is there room for quarrel and dissension? Where is there room for a person to fight his brothers and think that he is superior? The hardest thing to cure is religious fanaticism. The fanatical conception of religion can become the most destructive force in the world.

So we must wake up. We must not accept religion in a dreamy, visionary way. We must not accept it blindly. Instead we should make it the supreme fact in our life. This means revising our religious conception and making it realistic, never dogmatic. Dogma is too dangerous. It binds us in a little, narrow circle. It does not give us true vision. If we want true religion — and surely this is the desire of every heart — then we must adopt the right method. The right method is to look within. All the Bibles of the world tell us this. Look within, seek with-

in; the Kingdom of God is within. Love thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul. Above all things be united with Him, and then go out and perform thy duties, whatever they may be.

As I study human nature, I realize that we cannot divide ourselves. We cannot say there is Westerner or Easterner. We must recognize that there is but one family, and God is the presiding Deity over that family. Until we can recognize that, until we can feel in our heart that God is both Father and Mother and that the world, this universe, is our home — until we can manifest such a glorious, elevating and uplifting spirit — we are not religious no matter what we may call ourselves.

No man can truly pray to God until his thoughts are freed from all hateful, envious and unworthy feelings. Our offering is not worthy of the Supreme Being until our heart is cleansed. And who can cleanse our hearts? Only we, ourselves. We know our defects. We know how to overcome our own weakness. We must be willing to work. Religious life does not mean a dreamy, visionary life, nor is it dependent on going to church one day a week. It means living the life every day. It means looking into your own face in the mirror, and feeling that you are genuine, are not deceiving yourself. It means looking into your own heart and knowing that you are not afraid to open that heart and knowing that you are not afraid to open that heart before Almighty Being. That is the test of religious life. Every individual being can work and every being has within himself the center wherein dwells the principle of universal love and tolerance. It lies nowhere else. When you have awakened that consciousness within, then alone you feel united with the universe; then alone you can project your love and destroy all evil influences. No mat-

ter what happens, under all circumstances, like a flower, you will shed your fragrance.

Today, more than ever before, we need the manifestation of Spirit. Do we not see everywhere dissension, quarrel, war? Men lack comprehension. They do not know what they are doing. They are swept by the glamour of materialization and unless they are careful they will bring about their own destruction. We are doing everything at present to develop our physical life and being. Let us rather cultivate that which will bring peace and satisfaction to the soul, for the soul is starved. If you starve your soul how can you expect to live eternally? We must give it food, and the only food of which the soul can partake is spiritual illumination.

Vedanta proclaims that every living being is potentially divine, but that this divinity is not manifested. That is the reason why we hate. That is the reason why we follow the wrong principle. That also is the reason why we are selfish. We think we are limited and that therefore we must concentrate on this little, material life, otherwise our hopes will be lost. That fear we must banish; but this cannot be done through the theoretical acceptance of religion. We may be convinced logically, through intellectual reasoning that there is a God but we find that when difficulties arise we are apt to forget. We are like the parrot who chants the name of the Lord, but when the cat comes near, utters its natural cry. What we need is more intellectual reasoning: we need spiritual perception. We need to make God part of our being through habit. We have formed certain habits of meditation; introspection. We desire to know, yet how irrational we are! We think that some Messiah will come and give us a revelation, but until we prepare ourselves we cannot receive Him.

Two people may go to a museum and each come out with an entirely different impression. One may be uplifted and inspired, while the other, because of his lack of penetration, may feel weary and bored. No one can give us spirituality until we ourselves, through our own hunger and thirst, our own genuine yearning for spiritual vision, are ready to be awakened. When the field is ready the seed is bound to come. When we are ready, God will grant that seed. Then we shall know what to do, first for our own little needs, then perhaps for our immediate family, and finally for all our fellow men. For as our vision expands we shall not remain bound even by our own country, but shall find everywhere One Eternal Divine Being. Herein lies our true joy. As long as we do not let ourselves go, however, but remain revolving round and round this little circle, centered in the lower self, we shall not know our own glory. We find our self in God, and not until we know God do we know our true individuality. One who has realized God, he alone has found permanent life, he alone can leave something behind him which radiates peace and blessing.

Let us hope then that our individual efforts may bring about the fulfillment of this most wonderful dream of all — the dream of brotherhood, of oneness, that we may stand together imbued with the spirit of tolerance, of universality — never striking, never destroying, but working in love for the good, the happiness and the liberation of all men.

If a man would have peace, let him exercise the spirit of Peace; if he would find love, let him dwell in the spirit of Love; if he would escape suffering, let him cease to inflict it.

—James Allen

FROM ACROSS THE BLACK WATER

Letters from Gayatri Devi

III

Calcutta, January 14, 1953

... As you see from the above address I am still in this large city of ill health and humanity. Living here, one has the sensation of being in New York's Grand Central Station, alive with sound and movements. The two Ashramas are like beehives which begin to buzz from early dawn. When several hundred people live in one building of only limited rooms there can be neither quiet nor privacy for anyone. Jadu relinquishes her one small room to me during my stay with her, and sleeps in another with three or four girls. All are beautifully disciplined at the Ashramas, yet solitude is not possible there...

I came to ... our sister's home in Alipur, five days ago ... Here I have a room with a private bath and can keep certain times of prayer and meditation in relative privacy.

Last Saturday, the 10th, we chose to pay our respects to the old Kali temple, of historic importance, at Kalighat nearby. Mr. Mukherjee, a close friend of this family, accompanied me. It turned out to be an experience I will remember for a long time. We were practically crushed in the crowd. We saw a phase of religion, the appearance of which needs correction. *Pandas* in charge of the Temple exploit the visitors, offer absolutely no direction in leading them to the altar, which creates disorder and confusion. The whole place was the theatre for clamor, filth, and mercenary outrage. Instead of being able to offer Mother the garland of red hibiscus we

had brought, I was pushed against Her image and had to hold the arm in order not to fall down. All this I had seen before, but witnessed again with new eyes. One does appreciate the genuine devotion of the people who throng there, but their utter lack of discipline is the shame of India. Only through government intervention some of these conditions can be altered, but it moves slowly in the field of religion to avoid uprising and trouble among the people.

On Sunday, the 11th, Chhabi (brother-in-law) took us all to a fishing village which now operates as a cooperative. Under the honest guidance and protection of a handful of government officials, three hundred fishermen and their families have paid off their huge debts, built excellent reserve in fish and funds, and are now operating as a fairly secure and contented community. We moved about in boats through the canals and were shown how the men fish with large nets in shallow water. On this excursion I met some interesting people. Together we sang old national anthems. Everyone is amazed that my memory has retained the words and tunes that Indians living here have forgotten. The contact with these friends led to an invitation from a wealthy home on the following evening, where we met in an international group. It included Nirmal Bose, the professor who taught Gandhiji Bengali and traveled with him in East Bengal during and after the Hindu-Moslem riots. There were present business men, doctors, government officials, their wives, a woman writer, a motion picture star and others. At suggestion I had taken along the album of Ashrama pictures. It passed from hand to hand. As it was a social gathering I did not speak formally, but had good conversation regarding the work in America.

Mrs. Sen asked me for an article in Bengali for her magazine, also for pictures of myself and of the American Centres.

Wednesday evening, the 14th, at least thirty persons — family and friends — came to my sister's house. Among them was Professor Bose. Like others who have been Gandhiji's close associates, he has a quality of calm and reserve. At my request he told us about Mahatma, of his humility, tolerance and humor, by citing incidents. I told him of my desire to see personally the men and the work now being carried on in Gandhi's spirit and according to his ideals. Mr. Bose's remark was that Gandhi has become a household deity, but as for his work, there is not much to see . . .

Saturday, January 17; Shantiniketan

We came here two days ago after a two-and-one-half hours' journey from Calcutta. Chukku, the sister next to me in years, and Mother accompanied me. We are staying with a younger sister . . .

Oh, after the noise and germ-filled dust of Calcutta, Shantiniketan is heaven! Since our arrival in India for the first time we felt the quiet and peace in our surroundings. Here the earth is red, and the wide open space invites the eyes toward the horizon. Children, men and women, go about barefooted; they look healthy and contented.

Shantiniketan is our poet Rabindranath Tagore's dream child growing in an atmosphere of purity and stillness . . .

You are on my lips more often than you can realize. I pray the winter will be mild for those who live in the Cloister, and grant all good health. As for happiness and peace, these are our birthright and we can have as

much or as little as we desire. May the Lord light our path at every step, is the earnest wish of

Your devoted Gayatri Devi

* * * * *

Trivandrum, Travancore State

February 21, 1953

My constant desire to share the present experiences with you must indicate how close you are in my heart and mind. Tonight as I watched *arati** in the Temple of *Padmanava* (*Vishnu*) of this capital city of a southern state, I found myself talking to you (not verbally, however) about what I saw and felt. We went there at dusk to have a good view of the old Hindu edifice with hundreds of stone images, then to join the worshipers. There are countless little brass lamps, some hanging from the ceiling, some held stationary on metal bars which form a kind of high fence along the lengthy corridors, and others are a part of standing light in the shape of a lotus that has its layers of open petals separated in tiers. Against the stone pillars are carved statues, each holding a lotus petal-shaped container in hand. As darkness deepened within the Temple walls, and shadows vanished from the granite floors of the surrounding yards, lighted wicks peeped their heads out of the coconut-oil in these many lamps. Shrill trumpets began to blow together with the beating of drums and the ringing of bells, while the visitors stood, some in silence, some chanting prayers in Tamil or Sanskrit or Malayalam, some with folded palms, others with eyes closed, all awaiting the *darshan* or vision of the Deity, behind the shut doors of the inner sanctuary. Suddenly the music became louder, sound of the bells grew multiple and the

*Evening worship

carved wooden doors went ajar. For a second I became conscious of the magic of true devotion in the heart of these people around me, to whom God is real and living through the created forms! They really believe that the All-Mighty is before their eyes and a glimpse of the enshrined Spirit is bliss and salvation. An Indian devotee *sees* (which means *darshan*) with naked eyes the Invisible and the Intangible, such is the power of his faith and love.

Tonight we are at the southernmost part of India, a beautiful city, bordered by Western Ghats (a range of mountains) in the distance on one side and low hills and cultivated valleys on the other, while the Indian Ocean washes its feet. Tomorrow we drive fifty-four miles to the open sea where on the beach stands the Temple of *Kanya Kumari* (Virgin Daughter or Divine Mother as a young girl). It is there on a huge rock Swami Vivekananda had stood sixty years ago, and facing the vast ocean realized in a prophetic vision the future of his Motherland and his own mission. I am told that we could not reach that ocean-bathed rock without the aid of boats, and the waters are rough around it, but at least I hope to see it from close distance and bring back to America a little of the sand that holds in silence the secret of the past.

Since we visited the Temple of Jagannath at Puri by the sea nearly two weeks ago we have travelled steadily toward the south, keeping close to the eastern coast. We were in Madras sixty hours, in Pondichery from early morning until evening, in Tanjore, Rameswar, and Madura, long enough to see the Temples, palaces and other significant places and to make proper train connections. I have seen so much within such a brief period that al-

ready some of the impressions have a tendency to become indistinct. Therefore I am eager to capture and pass them on to you before they are lost.

By now I have become an authentic pilgrim except that I am not worthy to maintain a rigorous status of fasting and self-discipline. Had I chosen to lodge at hotels and to follow the western mode of more comfortable travelling I would have missed a great deal. Instead I consider it my type of austerity to accept all discomforts, inconvenience and hardship graciously and make every necessary adjustment without a whimper. This is the way I can prove that the American luxurious living has not made me unfit for life in India. I have spent many nights on the jolting upper berths of trains, half slept on luggage on railroad platforms while waiting to make connection in the wee hours of the morning, eaten food hot with chili, out of half-clean, sewn-together leaves, ridden oxen-drawn covered wagons or the most primitive horse carriages or bicycle-drawn uncomfortable Rikshas, stayed at rooms without furniture or electricity, enjoying every experience and suffering no discomfort whatsoever. I still wear the summer shoes I brought from U.S.A., while walking, and go barefooted when necessary. In India one is not allowed to enter even the precincts of a place of worship with shoes on feet.

Monday, February the 23rd . . . We are on a train again, moving toward the interior for our visit to the State of Mysore. This section of the country is a reminder of California with ranges of mountains, hills, plateaux and valleys. Yesterday afternoon's drive from Trivandrum to Cape Comorin, is one to be cherished in memory. The view on the way brought back to mind

places I have seen in Italy or Japan or the western coast of the United States. It is at the Cape our beloved Mother India dips her feet into the Indian ocean. Granite cliffs, some high, some low, hold their heads erect like proud sentinels guarding their precious charge. Rows and rows of stately cocoanut and other types of palm and shade trees end at the crescent-shaped beach and lead one's gaze toward the vast expanse of purple-blue waters, made finite only by the distant line of the horizon. We arrived there at twilight after the red sun had disappeared, leaving behind its trail of crimson, coral and golden color in the sky. We walked down to the edge of the water; waves came dashing up toward the rocks near which we stood on the sand and washed our feet. The Vivekananda Rock was only a few furlongs away, indifferent like its hero to our praising gaze. Not until the darkness had made the Temple mysterious did we walk toward it and enter the high door. Twinkling oil lamps inside did their best to light the granite-column passages. Only around the main altar, the throne of the Virgin Mother, were garlands of oil lights that revealed Her bright and beautiful form. She wore a crescent of gold on Her head, real diamonds shone out of the ornaments worn over Her nostril, on upper lip and forehead and on the lobe of the ears. Camphor and incense scented the air, and music came from the lips of chanting Brahmin priests.

From the Temple we returned to the water front, now lighted by the half-full moon. We walked a long way with our newly discovered friend, Mr. Mathews, listening to the endless song of the ocean; and returned to the car with some reluctance at eight o'clock. On the fifty-four mile return trip I sang in Bengali and English and

Mr. Mathews did the same in his own mother tongue, Malayalam, during the good part of the journey.

The line of Swamiji's poem, "With many hearts dost Thou love me," often becomes living through actual experience. Yesterday, after the taxi had been engaged for the round trip to and from Cape Comorin the matron of the Railway Station's Retiring Rooms (where we usually lodge) came to our quarters and asked if we were going to the Cape. She added that there was a gentleman, a rich banker, who would like to take us in his private car. At this I went with the matron to greet Mr. Mathews who also was occupying a room at the Station. He is an Indian Christian, has his home, family and business at Tinnevely, eighty miles from Trivandrum. We found him a refined gentleman and most generous. His own car had some trouble, therefore he hired a taxi and took us on this memorable drive. Moreover he bought us a big basket of mangoes and many bananas and wanted us to go to his home and be his guests. Now I have a ready invitation to southern India which he would like to show us by his private motor. Mr. Mathews is a quiet person, not at all aggressive or even expressive. He came to the station this morning to see us off.

There we met Sri Sivaraman who is the Chief Aide of the Maharaja of Travancore and Cochin. These were native states during British administration and are now a part of the Indian republic. We had seen the above mentioned gentleman in the Temple yesterday morning where we had gone for the second time to have a glimpse of the Maharaja. We had been told that His Highness came there every day to worship and re-dedicate himself to God's service. We did see the King as he came out of the inner Sanctuary and walked through the camphor-

covered entrance hall. Maharaja is very devout and a bachelor.

At the station I had a fine visit with the Maharaja's aide, Sri Sivaraman. He has our address, has given us his, and invited me to be his guest in Trivandrum next time. He is a devout Brahmin, and a handsome figure. It was sheer delight to watch him as he circuited an altar in the Temple yesterday. He had only a fine cotton *dhoti* on and a similar narrow-bordered *chuddar* around the upper part of his body. He was completely covered yet dressed in utmost simplicity.

Most of the famous Temples that we visited are now faintly etched in memory. They are great works of art and some a thousand or twelve hundred years old. At each place we needed hours to study carved or molded figures. There are hundreds of them, both outside the edifice and inside, all representing typical Indian sculpture. In some Temples there are twelve or thirteen foot size bulls carved out of one black or white stone, giant forms of gods, goddesses, major and minor deities made of brass, bronze, iron and stone. They are all characters with which a Hindu becomes familiar through his acquaintance with mythology, *Tantra* and epics, in early childhood. South India is truly the custodian of India's ancient culture and spiritual tradition. From Madras to Rameswaram and Trivandrum to Mysore many are the Sanctuaries that adorn the body of this most unusual land. Here still religion remains the main source of enjoyment and uplift. Invariably one finds a lake near the Temple lined with gracious steps on four sides, down to the water. People crowd them to watch a festival during which the Deity is taken in procession by a high chariot to a float and entertained with music and suppli-

cations for hours. Nowhere in the world can people be so aroused through religious devotion as in India. What I witnessed was not emotional outburst nor evangelistic enthusiasm, but a sincere and quiet expression of genuine faith and ardor.

The great Temple at Tanjore impressed me the most by the purity of its sculpture. We saw it practically alone when no other visitors were in sight and enjoyed the quiet and freedom in order to observe the details of architecture carefully. It is dedicated to *Shiva* the *Nataraj* who destroys and transforms the universe while He dances in ecstasy. Words cannot describe the ethereal beauty of the dancing *Shiva* of which there are many. Some are single figures of metal, others are carved against the granite columns and walls. In fact all the heavenly beings, gods, goddesses, angels, celestial entities of multiple names, and animals are in a dancing pose. It is from these Temples our artists have derived the mode of Hindu dancing. There are ancient inscriptions etched on the rock walls and multi-colored frescoes. We went to the palace of the Maharaja of Tanjore, now in the hands of the government and in the process of being turned into a museum. There, too, we read India's past history, proud and glorious, in the innumerable stones and very large paintings on the walls.

The Temple at Rameswaram which is a southeastern tip of the land going toward the Strait of Ceylon, is a gigantic monument, the largest, I believe, in the area. We walked through thousands of feet of corridors inside in order to have a glimpse of the main shrine. This Temple is massive in structure and impressive in appearance. Here, too, the statues are countless and mostly in dancing postures. Rameswar is another name of *Shiva*

whom Rama had worshipped and invoked here. We went by train to Dhanuskodi where waters of Bay of Bengal join the Indian Ocean. We rode through a narrow strip of land, broad enough for the railroad track only, between two bodies of inland water, on to the open ocean. Here we bathed together with other pilgrims as an act of piety. According to *Ramayana*, here Rama had commanded the ocean to be still, threatening it with uplifted bow and arrow, so that he could build the bridge and go across to rescue His Sita, imprisoned in Lanka (Ceylon) at the palace of the demon king, Ravana. We had to ride three miles in an ox cart over the deep sand in order to participate in the true pilgrim's activity. Most of them walk to the sea but we did not have the time, nor could Mother and Sumita's mother, who are my companions, take the strain. On the same day India's president, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was at Rameswaram and Dhanuskodi visiting the Temples and taking the sacred plunge. Our train had to wait at a junction for an hour or more to let his special carrier pass by. The village streets were decorated with garlands of flower-designs, made out of narrow strips of banana leaves. The common Indian is very poor but so simple and quite artistic, at least here in the south.

The Temple of Madura is the most renowned, specially for its five entrance towers or *gopuram*, elaborate and ornate with thousands of carved figures. The replica of this monument is on the stained glass window of our Temple of the Universal Spirit in La Crescenta Ananda Ashrama. Two principle Deities enshrined here are *Shiva* and *Parvati* (the Mother is called *Meenakshi*). The dome of the Mother's Shrine is wrapped in gold sheet. She, too, is adorned with gold and silver orna-

ments, so much so that the figure is laden and lost to human sight for structural delicacy. Much wealth is preserved in some of the temples, as the personal property of the Deities. You should see the small entrance doors of the shrines. Not a few are exquisite craftsmanship in silver. The twenty or twenty-five foot ones are very beautifully carved wood. Everywhere lotus design predominates, lotus being the symbol of the Soul.

That reminds me of our one-day visit to Pondichery where Sri Aurobindo's Ashrama is located. On his *Samadhi* monument* were laid layers and layers of flowers, some of which were pink lotuses. All the visitors as well as the residents, about nine hundred persons, come there daily to lay their floral offering. His tomb rests under a large tree (no one could tell me its name) which blossoms in right season, in the courtyard of the main building. This section has real atmosphere, also Sri Aurobindo's private room and the study which are furnished most tastefully. I had the opportunity to talk with some of the leading men as I was eager to learn of the true aims of the place and of the people. All the activities and the very consciousness of the unusual colony revolves around the "Mother." I watched her play tennis, grant blessings and flowers to the Ashramites and visitors who stood in line or waited long periods in patience for a glimpse of the lady. The march of the girls at sundown, like soldiers, was the most unique feature of the institution. The men, too, were in a drill but in a separate body. The Mother's private secretary was able to arrange a few minutes talk with her for my benefit although I was not alone in her company. She is a remarkable French woman, now seventy-six years old; must have been

*Monument erected to Sri Aurobindo after his great Release.

extremely competent to have built up such an organization . . . Mother is now planning for a university mainly to teach Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, in addition to the many departments such as school, workshop and printing press that already exist.

While in Madras we went to see the Ramakrishna Mission Girls' School, the Destitute Women's Home and the Theosophical Society's Headquarters. The latter has a choice location by the Adyar river. The sea, too, is beside it and the members have access to a private beach. The main building is a fine construction, the large hall with statues, painted symbols, inscriptions and pictures presents an impressive appearance. The grounds, trees and flower gardens all are in grand taste, a delight for the sight. The most unusual section is the library containing old manuscripts and books in multiple languages. Many of them are written on palm leaves. We saw in the glass case the very first Lutheran Bibles, a minute edition and a very large copy.

Rukmini Devi invited us to her School of Dance and Music which is an authentic institution of its kind. We spent an entire morning there. She herself escorted us to all the departments and had us see and hear *Bharat Nritya* (Indian dance) and South Indian classical music respectively.

The Ramakrishna Mission *Sarada Vidyalaya* is the largest girls' school within the Order. It gives education to seventeen hundred girls, ranging from kindergarten age to high school size. The headmistress, Miss Subralakshmi and the gentleman she called the "correspondent" asked me to address the girls, which I was able to do then and there without any former plan. As she showed me various classes in session, the students jointly

called aloud *Namaste* (we salute you) as we passed by the verandah, also said *Jai Bharat* (glory to India) as a farewell greeting . . .

Beneath the surface thoughts and expressions is my watchful consciousness ever seeking your protection, happiness and blessing. Life provides us with material for experience and growth. Each of us must appreciate and utilize what is given us and go forward toward our goal. He knows our yearning and need, therefore let us have faith and more faith.

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF WORLD ORDER

By 'Abdu'l-Baha

"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

(Baha'u'llah)

[In this hour of the world's history when the horizons seem dark with night and prognostications are all of disaster, death and moral failure, the more helpful appraisal of the present age, given by the great Baha'i teacher and prophet 'Abdu'l-Baha, may prove good medicine. 'Abdu'l-Baha passed out on November 28, 1921.]

This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and paradise. It is the hour of unity of the sons of men and of the drawing together of all races and all classes . . .

In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the absence of means, the unity of all mankind could not have been achieved. Continents remained widely divided, nay even among the peoples of one and the same continent association in interchange of thought were well-nigh impossible. Consequently intercourse, understanding and unity amongst all the peoples

and kindreds of the earth were unattainable. In this day, however, means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the earth have virtually merged into one . . . In like manner all the members of the human family, whether peoples of governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved. Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century. Of this past ages have been deprived, for this century — the century of light — has been endowed with unique and unprecedented glory, power and illumination. Hence the miraculous unfolding of a fresh marvel every day. Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will burn in the assemblage of man.

Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world's darkened horizon. The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendor. The fifth candle is the unity of nations—a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race. The seventh candle is unity

of language, i. e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse. Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.

LITANY FOR PROTECTION

By Sister Devamata

From scorching flame,
 Lord, shield us ;
From rushing wind and storm ;
From trembling earth and bursting cloud ;
From lightning's flash
And preying beast ;
From all that harms or threatens,
O Lord, deliver us !
But over all, O shield us Lord,
From the ravages of self !

From scorching flames of passion ;
From selfishness and hate ;
From rushing winds of anger ;
And bursting cloud of doubt ;
From tremblings of impatience,
From preying beast of greed,
From all that soils or weakens,
O Lord, deliver us !
Save, save us, Lord, we pray Thee
From the ravages of self !

The Buddha teaches a complete surrender of self, but he does not teach a surrender to those powers that are evil.

— *Gautama Buddha*

BE THE OCEAN, NOT THE WAVE

By Swami Vivekananda

All the various forms of energy, such as matter, force, thought, intelligence, and so forth, are simply the manifestations of cosmic intelligence, or the Supreme Lord. Everything you see, feel or hear—the whole universe—is His creation, or to be a little more accurate, His projection; or to be still more accurate, is the Lord Himself. He comes as the gentle showers, He is the air we breathe, it is He who works as force in the body. He is the speech that is uttered, He is the man who is talking. He is the audience that is here. He is the platform on which I stand. He is the light that enables me to see your faces. It is all He. He Himself is both the material and the efficient cause of this universe, and He it is that gets involved in the minute cell and evolves at the other end and becomes God again. This is the great mystery of the universe. This is the only solution of the cosmos that satisfies the human intellect.

Philosophical systems and ideas are but gymnastics of the mind. The one great idea that to me seems clear, and that comes out through masses of superstition in every country and religion, is the luminous idea that man is Divine, that Divinity is our nature. Whatever else comes is a mere superimposition, as the Vedanta calls it. Something has been superimposed, but that Divine nature never dies. In the most degraded as well as the most saintly, it is ever present. It has to be called out and will work itself out. The soul is one with Freedom, and the soul is one with Existence, and the soul is one with Knowledge. *Sat-Chit-Ananda* — Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute — is the nature, the birthright of the soul, and all the manifestations that we see are Its ex-

pressions, dimly or brightly manifesting Itself.

All progression is in the relative world. Man is the highest being that exists, and this is the greatest world. This is the great center, the wonderful poise, and the wonderful opportunity — this human life — because here and now we can get rid of the relative world entirely, can actually attain Freedom, and this is the goal. Not only can we reach perfection, but some have reached perfection. So no matter what finer bodies come, they could only be on the relative plane and could do no more than we, for to attain Freedom is all that can be done.

The sum total of knowledge is ever the same, only sometimes it is more manifested and sometimes less. The only source of it is within; there only is it found. I am the whole ocean. Do not call the little wave you have made, "I"; know it for nothing but a wave. Look at the ocean and not at the wave; see no difference between ant and angel. Every worm is the brother of the Nazarene. How say one is greater and one less? Each is great in his own place. We are in the sun and in the stars as much as here. Spirit is beyond space and time, and is everywhere. Every mouth praising the Lord is my mouth, every eye seeing is my eye. We are confined nowhere; we are not body; the universe is our body. We are now conscious only where the body is, we can use only one brain; but when we reach ultraconsciousness, we know all, we can use all brains.

Here is the ideal. When a man has no more self in him, no possession, nothing to call "me" or "mine," has given himself up entirely, destroyed himself as it were, in that man is God Himself; for in him self-will is gone, crushed out, annihilated. That is the ideal man. We cannot reach that state yet; still, let us worship the ideal and

slowly struggle to reach the ideal, though with faltering steps. It may be tomorrow, or it may be a thousand years hence, but that ideal has to be reached. For it is not only the end but also the means. To be unselfish, perfectly selfless, is salvation itself, for the man within dies, and God alone remains.

Never forget the glory of human nature. We are the greatest God that ever was or ever will be. Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless Ocean which *I am*. Bow down to nothing but your own higher Self. Until you know that you are that very God of gods, there will never be any freedom for you.

BEARERS OF THE LIGHT

By Havelock Ellis

The present is in every age merely the shifting point at which past and future meet, and we can have no quarrel with either. There can be no world without traditions; neither can there be any life without movement. There is never a moment when the new dawn is not breaking over the earth, and never a moment when the sunset ceases to die. It is well to greet serenely even the first glimmer of the dawn when we see it, not hastening towards it with undue speed, nor leaving the sunset without gratitude for the dying light that was once dawn.

In the moral world, we are ourselves the light-bearers, and the cosmic process is in us made flesh. For a brief space it is granted to us, if we will, to enlighten the darkness that surrounds our path. As in the ancient torch-races, which seemed to Lucretius to be the symbol of all life, we press forward torch in hand along the course. Soon from behind comes the runner who will outpace us. All our skill lies in giving into his hand the living torch, bright and unflickering, as we ourselves disappear in the darkness.

FROM COVERT SPRINGS

By Amy Russell

The covert spring that bubbles up to slake
This thirst—as great as any we have shared—
Is sprung from hidden courses, undeterred
By root of twisted tree or knotty brake.
It wells through clay, defiant stone, to take
A limpid way, as if the earth had cared
That virtue to the sunlight should be bared
Simply, and for a thirsty lover's sake
And if the source be covered thick with moss
Or choked with sodden leaves the seasons through,
The stream is yielded clearer to the light.
So from dark years which we have counted loss
Is sprung a fountain, where we may renew
By deepened draft, our health and our delight.

God has infinite treasure to bestow and we take up with sensible devotion which passes in a moment. Blind as we are, we hinder God and stop the current of His graces. But when He finds a soul penetrated with a lively faith, He pours into it His graces and favors plentifully, where they flow like a torrent.

Let us then enter into ourselves. The time presses and there is no room for delay. We must always work at breaking down the bank which hinders our growth, for not to advance in the spiritual life is to go back.

We must serve God in a holy freedom; we must do our business faithfully, without trouble or disquiet, recalling our mind to God with tranquillity, as often as we find it wandering from Him. Let all our employment be to know God — we should love him equally in pains and pleasures.

—*Sayings of Brother Lawrence*

MYSTIC MINSTRELS OF BENGAL

By Lila Ray

The Bauls are itinerant musicians who wander from village to village and market to market singing to the accompaniment of a one-stringed lute, the *ananda-lahari*. They wear their hair long and dress in a patched robe similar to that worn by Taoists and Sufis. At regular intervals they gather at certain fairs and market places all over Bengal and spend three or four days together in community feasting and singing. The best known of these meeting places is Kenduli, the birthplace of the great poet, Jayadeva, in the district of Birbhum.

The Bauls are commonly bracketed with the Auls. The Aul-Bauls, people say. Aul, M. Mansuruddin, an authority on the subject tells us, is derived from the Arabic word, *auliya*, meaning wise man. Baul is of Sanskrit origin and means, literally, 'wind-struck,' that is to say, mad. So the Bauls have been called the "Fools of God." For it is of God the Bauls sing. "Some call Him Hari, some call Him Allah!" was the refrain of a song I heard in Chittagong.

Rabindranath Tagore has called the collective beliefs of the Bauls the Religion of Man. "In this man is that Man," they sing. Divinity, for them, is objectified in humanity. Mystically united, these two natures, the human and the divine, are concentric though not identical. The pilgrimage the Baul undertakes is the descent into himself in search of the Universal Man, in the discovery of whom he realizes the living God in the human heart.

"Where shall I find Him,

The Man in my Heart?

Having lost Him,

In search of Him

I wander in native and foreign lands . . ."

Thus sang Gagan Baul, a village postman near the Tagore estate at Shelaidaha.

The Baul way of conducting this search, the way of all true mystics, is the way of reverent love, for love is the light which in every man is the same in kind, though not in degree, and differentiates each from the other while it unites. In what a man is, not in what he thinks, in his love, not in his intellect, lies his true character. This song tells of the long journey the Baul makes through aloneness to comforting intimacy and union:

“My life is a light on a stream. At which ghat didst Thou set me afloat?

Before me is darkness, behind me darkness. Deep pours the dark. Through the darkness linking waves make unceasing music.

Beneath them, endless, deep, flows the flooding night.

There is no shore. The light keeps me company.

Days pass and nights. By my side burns the light.

Friend, Sakha! Shore of the shoreless! The waters are wide!

How many bends before I find Thee? How the waters call!

I see! I see!

Into Thy lap Thou shalt take me and cool my burning.

In Thy breast I shall go out in gladness, cooling my yearning.”

This was composed by Gangaram. Gagan and Gangaram were “untouchables.” Other famous Bauls have been Muslim by birth. The majority are illiterate. The Baul religion may be said to be the religion of the illiterate and outcast, of those who, in addition to being of humble birth, sever their connections with the society and creed into which they are born by a deliberate act of the will. And their philosophy is the popular philosophy of Bengal if one may judge the extent of its influence from the mark it has set upon the folk literature of the country. Here are a few lines from a boat song:

“O boatman heart, take your oar!

I can row no more!

All my life I’ve pulled this oar.

The boat no longer stems upstream . . .”

Man, to the Bauls, is not simply an individual, tied up like a birthday present with the ribbons of social relationships. He is not even the symbol of a human type; he is the Macrocosm itself in miniature, the mirror of the cosmos, the microcosm in which all divine attributes are united. The spiritual is accepted as the basic element in human nature, the element all men have in common with one another and with God. This makes the observance of community and caste distinctions impossible. Any religious or social regulation which sets up barriers between men has to be discarded. Madan Baul, born a Muslim, sang this song:

“Temples and mosques conceal the way to Thee . . .
Many are the locks on Thy door—
The Puran, the Koran, the Hindu and Muslim
rosaries . . .”

In this awareness of the dangers of dogma the Bauls are akin to Lao Tse. They practice no rites, cherish no relics, perform no penances, worship no idols, keep no vigils or fasts, and are not celibates. No miracles, no magic and no exorcism has any place in their teaching. Staleness does not make a lie true, they say. Their songs are their only texts and they reject formalized wisdom. Their traditions are largely oral. “Are we dogs,” ask the Bauls, “that we should lick the leavings of forgotten feasts? By the grace of God we shall not lack fresh nourishment.” They prefer living experience. Life is of supreme importance, a great cosmic creative life that transcends and includes our own, “Big enough to be God and small enough to be me.” They believe inspiration will not fail them as long as men have need of inner illumination.

The Bauls are also akin to Lao Tse in their conception of the Real as the natural. I know of no better definition of the Baul tenet of the *Sahaj* than these words of

his "the perfect balancing of a man at endless ease with everything." The word *Sahaj* means Ease. The effortless ease of perfect mastery is implied. It is about as easy, say the Bauls, as making a frog dance in a snake's mouth. Sri Kshiti Mohan Sen once asked a Baul why it is they make no effort to preserve the names of the composers of their songs. The elderly Baul, pointing first to the full river where boats were passing under sail and then to the almost dry canal where boats stood on the mud, answered, "Do the boats under full sail leave any trace of their passage? The track of the boat being pushed along the canal is marked plainly in the mud. Which is the simpler and more natural way? Ours is the simple way. The leaving of footprints is artificial and unimportant."

The dispassionate coolness of Lao Tse is not, however, the Bauls'. Quietists, Taoists or Quakers are not necessarily mystics. Mysticism cannot exist without passionate emotion. The Bauls differ also from the Buddhists. Buddhists believe in the universality of suffering, Bauls in the universality of love. Love entails suffering but the emphasis is on joy. The noblest of all passions is the passion for perfection for love's sake. Love is the agent of the initiate's purification. The songs of the Bauls are full of descriptions of the nature of this love: "Make love, my heart, knowing the art of love. Is to love an idle word? Know your guru ere you choose him . . ." Lalou Fakir sings:

"Without knowing the love that turns dark fair
Many love by guess-work, asking for the
noose of death . . ."

"I loved that I might be happy," laments Radha, "and I have been crying all my life." Compare this with the cry

of the Sufi: "God gave the dervish love — and love is woe; by dying near and dear to Him they grow." It is only through love that the Man in the Heart is to be approached. The Baul sings:

"Who but a lover can know
That He is wild with secret love?
The nature of that love
Only those who love can know."

And for the Baul as for the Sufi earthly love is a bridge to divine love. "Where will he find this treasure?" asks Lalou, "who does not have it in his heart?" In another song he puts it amusingly: "In Dacca there is no news of Delhi, nor in Delhi news of Dacca."

In the ecstatic character of their vision the Bauls have affinities with Christian mystics as well as with the Sufis. There is similarity of language and similarity of metaphor. The symbol of the fish is common to St. Mechthild of Germany and the lonely boatman of the Meghna. The bird is also a symbol common to Europe, the Middle East and India. We find the same language of exalted emotion in the songs of St. John of the Cross, Ibnu'l-Farid and the illiterate Baul of Bengal. The Baul differs from the Christian in his acceptance of material existence as a revelation, not an estrangement, from God. He does not repudiate the sensible. Accepting the data of the senses as experience of God he uses love to cleanse the apertures and clarify his perceptions.

What fool shouts at one who is by his side? demands the Baul and grows quiet. He is quiet that he may hear that which speaks within. He becomes elusive and reticent, keeping to himself. He has "plunged into the river of love and beheld His Beauty." Absorbed in the inner contemplation of that Beauty, rejoicing in the presence

of the Divine as his friend and hourly companion, he is oblivious of external things. "With what can I compare Him in whose love the earth rejoices?" he asks. Intrusions upon his silence and solitude are resented. Asked what proof there is of the existence of God, a Baul said, "Is He a broken wheel that talks all the time?"

One into whose finite consciousness the infinite has penetrated even for an instant is henceforth haunted by the vision. As his awareness of being at unity with the divine becomes constant the transitory illumination of sudden vision is transformed into permanent spiritual union. Personality is changed and man becomes a God-moved soul, irradiated by a knowledge that is love and love that is knowledge. The sheer delight of this state is exquisitely expressed in this song by Ishan Yogi:

"Blessed am I! In Thy flute
 I am the breath of Thy mouth.
 If at one playing I am spent
 I shall not sorrow.
 Thy flute is the three worlds
 And I am Thy breath!
 I sound the stops of good and evil,
 I sing of happiness and grief.
 I play in the morning, I play in the evening,
 I play in the dead of night.
 I play in the spring, I play in the rain,
 I play with Thy heart.
 If I am spent utterly
 I shall not sorrow.
 Such a melody I have played!
 What more can I crave?"

The union that is a union of divine and human hearts has taken place, the Baul's yearning is fulfilled. He now binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of the heart for he has become a world in himself. With

fulfillment comes fruition. His God is the God who gives "songs in the night." Many are the songs he sings, songs lyrical in their ecstasy, songs of esoteric physiology, songs of the search for the Man in the Heart, riddles expressing the paradoxes of mystical knowledge, songs of the longing and uncertainty of the unassured lover. Characteristic is the use of the technical terminology of various crafts and occupations to convey the mystic message. The weaver, the potter, the spinner, the fisherman, the householder, the merchant and money-lender, even the hospital, office and law-courts supply the Baul with imagery. "The train of love is speeding past," he sings, "come to see quickly. How many thousands of love's travellers hurry down the roads. Each is carried across the world according to the class of ticket he buys."

True mystical achievement is at once an act of love, an act of surrender and an act of supreme perception. The completed mystical life is more than intuitional, it is deified, exhibiting a dual condition of fruition and activity that is, in the great mystics of the world, perhaps the crowning stage of human evolution. The mystic enters into the free creative life of the Real. His concept of love is as something which liberates and sets free, not as something which binds.

"My love is the gem whose touch
Turns desire to service.
For it heaven longs to be earth
And gods take human birth."

So sings the Baul. His service is his song. For him the spiritual world is, as it was for St. Francis of Assisi, "a heavenly melody, intolerably sweet."

Living in bondage. I have set myself free: I have
broken away from the clutch of all narrowness.

—*Kabir*

FROM A DISCIPLE'S NOTEBOOK

(Continued from the Summer Issue)

"Rise up, living life has come to us. The dark has passed away. The light comes . . . This light, best of lights has come. The brilliant, shining forerunner has been born . . .

"She, the daughter of the sky, has appeared shining afar, the young maid in white robes. Ruling over all earthly treasure, O Dawn, here today, auspicious one, shine afar.

"She follows the course of the dawns that have passed away, she the first of the endless dawns to come. Shining afar, rousing up the living, the dawn awakens none that is dead . . .

"Those mortals are gone, who beheld the former dawn shining afar. Now has she come to our sight. They are coming who shall behold in future times . . .

"Endlessly from of old the Dawn, the Goddess, has shone afar. Today has gleamed afar the generous one. So will she shine upon days to come. Ageless and immortal she goes on in her own wont.

"With unguents at the threshold of the day she has beamed forth. The Goddess has thrown aside the robe of darkness . . .

"Bringing prosperity and riches, showing herself she raises her brilliant banner, last of the endless dawns that have passed away, first of the shining ones to come. The Dawn has beamed forth . . ."

Whoever wrote this ancient hymn with its theme of endless renewal, must have stood refreshed and exalted as once again the daily pageant of sunrise invited the adoration of his soul. That "last of many dawns" bore no hint of age or staleness to this far away dweller in the

Motherland. It was as cool and radiant and beautiful as was Venus when she rose from the foam of the sea, unique, ageless, timeless, as though there was only the present, with no yesterdays and no tomorrows!

Modern man as a rule does not willingly awake to greet the sunrise, yet unconsciously it replenishes his inner being. There may be a few who follow Thoreau's advise and sleep "facing the dawn," but for the most part men sleep facing a certain hour when, unwilling, they must drag themselves from bed and assume the burden of the day. Even at the Ananda Ashrama in those pioneering years, the very early morning found the workers still asleep, though stirring with an uneasy premonition that the fatal hour was about to strike — on their alarm clocks.

Among the first to be up were those who were responsible for the preparation of the Shrine — a cherished task that soon drove away all sense of drowsiness. The birds, however, generally had sung their first songs and were busily seeking their breakfasts by the time the Temple doors were unlocked, the windows thrown open and the gathering of the flowers for the offering begun. But nevertheless, it was an enchanted hour, an hour of peace which lay softly over the hills — an hour when nature seemed in balance and thought could ascend more easily to the divine Source.

The Shrine, the Temple, or the atmosphere pervading it, the scent of roses and sage and lemon verbena mingling with the morning air, as leaves and flowers were made ready to lay before the feet of the Lord; clean hands, clean heart, an uplifted mind — all these helped to create the "sense of sanctity" so dear to the Swami's soul.

Sunrise is a ritual that has its preparation long before

the actual sun arrives. It is heralded by the lonely call of some brave bird probing the darkness with a single note. Then come more notes and small chirpings from other awakening birds; but soon after, all songs are silent and magic is abroad. The disciple vividly recalls one such enchanted dawning when special duties drew her to the shrine long before the usual hour. As she climbed the steps to the Temple patio the first grey light was spreading like an opening fan across the sky, bringing mountains and canyons more clearly into view. She was aware of a great hush over everything. Even her footfalls seemed to make no sound as she walked along the garden path with her flower basket on her arm. Every now and then the sheer wonder of it all broke over her and brought to her a sense of communion with the waiting trees and the myriad lives around her. A brooding spirit seemed to reach out and draw her into a circle of awareness. Involuntarily she stood still and held her breath and listened. It was then that she heard the birds; they were not singing, not even a single note, but they were flying everywhere. The whole air was filled with the fluttering of their wings. While the disciple stood there transfixed, like one who unbidden has stumbled into the midst of a sacred ceremony, birds flew by her so close to her head that she felt on her cheek the wind of their passing. On all sides there was a whirring and a sense of great activity, secret missions performed, safe from the intruding gaze of men. "This is a great poem," the disciple said to herself, "but where are the words, where, oh where are the words? It should be called "The Hour of Birdwings." When she finally went into the Temple, it was with an expanded and a worshipful heart.

The Swami generally awakened before the dawn. To

the mystic mind, and in the spiritual practices of India, dawn is considered one of the balance points of the day, along with noon and sunset. At these times cosmic and human forces are said to be in equilibrium. Therefore these are felt to be propitious hours for meditation.

The Swami's room looked out upon the cloister terrace on both the south and east sides. It was situated in the front of the original building, whereas the workers had their rooms in the wings which extended back towards the mountains. No human sounds, therefore, penetrated to his quarters to break the quiet of those early hours of the day.

Love of the dawn seemed innate with him. One of his most lovely songs came to him in Boston, where the walls of the city shut off the smile of the sky and earth's tender response. It was all in his soul, however, when he wrote:

“How lovely and fragrant is the coming of
the morn.
How tenderly it awakens the Lord of Day to
His dawn.
How sweetly it sings its heralding,
How quietly it opens
The mansion of its king.
How gently it rouses the flowers
From their night's repose.
My soul delights at the coming of morn.
My heart sings at the approach of dawn.”

Not a few of the Swami's nature songs came to him, so he told us, as he sat cross-legged upon his bed, listening first to the voice of the silence and then to the voice of the birds. In fact he has stated that these bird songs at daybreak brought him peculiar joy and exaltation.

“Thou hast given me hearing” (runs a
verse in one of his poems)
“And I hear the music
of the universe both day and night.

At the rising of the sun
 I hear the glad songs of Nature.
 And at the twilight hour,
 I feel the hush of silence.
 Oft I hold my breath and listen
 To Thy subtle, soundless music . . .”

One of these bird-inspired poems lingers on in the disciple's memory and she can never read it without seeing in her mind's eye that slender figure sitting there erect in the dim light, listening, listening, listening to the voice of the birds and to the voice of God. The poem is called “Dreamer” and runs as follows:

DREAMER

“Behold the bird of the air,
 With what ease it sways and swings,
 With what gait it follows its heavenly path
 With what grace it moves its wings.
 Aerial friend, at every morn I hear thee sing.
 The flutter of thy wings, mingled with the
 high note of thy song
 Awakens in my soul far forgotten thoughts.
 Whose messenger art thou, sweet musician?
 Whose mandate dost thou bring?”

Bird

I sing the song of life
 With the smile of the sun and the dance
 of the twilight.
 I float in the sky in rhythm
 With free spirit and joyous heart.
 It is the rhythm of life I sing at dawn,
 Calling thee to rise with new life.
 My mandate is to bring thee blessing
 from the ever blessed
 And to fill thy heart with joy.
 Dear dreamer, live in the rhythm of life
 in waking and sleeping.
 Then thou shalt know the spirit
 of my song.”

The Swami was surely open to that spirit and sought to instill it into the lives of the workers and into the life of the Ashrama as a whole. He himself was as a bird

singing in their midst, even as the name — (once given to him by Swami Brahmananda) *Bashanta Kokhil* (spring bird)—implied. It was a true name, for not only was he the purveyor of joy, but his wings were ever outstretched to give shelter to all who from their hearts sought sanctuary in him.

It was in the summer of 1926 that he became filled with the idea of a summer school, and promptly inaugurated it. The community swung into enthusiastic cooperation. The school was to mark the afore mentioned balance points of the day, beginning at 7:30 in the morning, anywhere on the Ashrama grounds. Generally, however, this meant on the grass, either at the edge of the front terrace or on the east side beneath a window of the Swami's room, under the spreading acacia tree. The Swami's own *Daily Thoughts and Prayers* was the text book used, which he interpreted in the light of the Vedic Ideal. Of course, there was always a period of silence which the Swami's presence made more deep and potent. Immediately following this early gathering, the morning devotional service was conducted by the Swami in the Shrine.

The picture of this opening class abides vividly in the disciple's mind. She sees again the circle of familiar faces, the Swami wrapped in his orange *chuddar*, looking as fresh as the surrounding trees and flowers, his vibrant yet controlled voice lifting all hearts by its very sound into a new atmosphere. Things always sounded more holy and seemed more living when he read them. One gentle human touch distinguished this early session. Invariably just after the Swami had seated himself, yogi fashion, on his rug with his slippers on the grass beside him, the Ashrama's wise and devoted Persian kitty, Fuzzles, would walk in upon the scene with sweet dignity. He

would without fail, make the circle of the attentive household, stopping for a moment before each member as if to pay his respects, and at the end would approach the Swami's slippers, sniff at them from a reverential distance with his delicate and sensitive nose, and then going to one side would sit down and remain quiet till the end of the lesson.

The Swami appreciated Fuzzles. He had seen him walk unhurried and without looking right or left, before a furiously barking police dog, who as a result, had made no attempt to chase him; he had seen him, after fifteen minutes of thought, in a far corner of the living room walk up quietly and without anger, and cuff Bengal, the other Ashrama cat on both sides of his jaw, not hard enough to hurt but as a just punishment for a flagrant betrayal. For Bengal, a wild and unruly fellow, had a few minutes before, accepted the loving and friendly advances of Fuzzles and then without warning had turned and scratched him. One day during a Shrine service, Fuzzles slipped into the Temple and started down the centre aisle toward the rug on which some of the members were seated. At once several of the household jumped to intercept him and put him out, but the Swami told them to let him alone, that it was all right for him to be there. So as usual with perfect composure, he came, sat down on the rug beside them and never moved till the service was over — the only animal that was ever allowed the privilege of a devotee. The disciple would not inject this true story of Ashrama animal life into an account of spiritual activities, were it not so wholly a part of the entire picture. Without the memory of Fuzzles, the memory of summer school would be incomplete; and something full of tenderness and grace would be lacking.

The next session of the school was at high noon and this class was held, so the disciple recalls, by a stone bench in what was then known as the Chapel Garden, a level stretch, running parallel to the cloister on the east side about half way down a bordering canyon. It is strange how remembrance includes every type of impression. Naturally the deep inspiration that came to all during the school is paramount, but this was enhanced by the setting and the sounds, colors and perfumes included in that setting. For this reason, she cannot think of the school without seeing the Swami as he walked toward the stone bench at the noon hour, his tall kingly though slender figure passing without effort and with unconscious grace down the tree-lined walk, the sunlight flickering down through the leaves upon his clinging golden-color *chud-dar* wrapped around him in soft folds. Not a spring bird singing this time, but spring itself approaching in serene beauty and with noiseless steps. After reaching the stone bench, the Swami would seat himself and open the holy book which was to provide him with a text. At one time the disciple recalls that certain passages from the *Dhammapada* of Lord Buddha served this purpose. Especially she recalls the reading of those verses :

*"We live happily indeed, not hating those who hate us!
Among men who hate us we dwell free from hatred!"*

*"We live happily indeed, free from ailments among the
ailing! Among men who are ailing let us dwell free from
ailments!"*

*"We live happily indeed, free from greed among the
greedy! Among men who are greedy let us dwell free
from greed!"*

*"We live happily indeed, though we call nothing our
own! We shall be like the bright gods, feeding on happi-
ness!"*

Looking at the Swami's radiant face and at the beautiful surroundings, the thought arose within the disciple's mind, "What an opportunity to realize the bliss of such a spiritual consciousness." The members were generally already assembled when the Swami took his place, but occasionally some of the brothers would come in at the last moment, warm and flushed from driving a tractor, irrigating trees or doing some other heavy task which a big place like the Ashrama entailed. Naturally they were in their working clothes, and one felt how blessed was this spontaneous meeting in the midst of the garden coolness for the sake of inner as well as outer refreshment.

The third session came in the late afternoon at about four o'clock, as close to the balance point of twilight as the Ashrama schedule allowed. It was held usually under the acacia tree, with verses from the Bhagavad Gita as text. At six o'clock the *Arati* or evening worship in the Shrine was performed.

Thus the day, with its hours of inner communion, was like a garland of prayer, very different no doubt from the average conception of a school in summer, winter or any other season. Yet if the purpose of education according to the root meaning of the word, is "to draw out," then the Summer School at the Ananda Ashrama did not fail in its purpose, for the Swami drew out from the depths of all present their highest intuitional perception, and in addition directed their vision to even higher elevations of spirit and of thought. The disciple has met many distinguished teachers for whom she has the most profound respect. But whereas they pronounced the Truth with consciousness of authority, the Swami opened himself to the Truth so that it poured through him as a poem might

come from the lips of a poet or a song from the throat of a singer. Most teachers emphatically do not ask you, they tell you. The Swami, too, told us but not with a sense of human pronouncement. He also asked, humbly and simply like a child, genuinely feeling that the Divine Mother's word might come to him from any quarter. Those who were privileged to dwell beside him were aware that it came through him.

During the Queensberry Street days, the disciple made a supreme effort to fix in her mind the Swami's words as they fell from his lips when, at various times, he spoke spontaneously to the household. The Notebook was the result.

The following extracts were not preserved through memory but consist of notes taken by the disciple at the various sessions of the Summer School. Since she does not write shorthand and her long hand could not keep up with the Swami's speech, what she was able to capture was, of necessity, often fragmentary and inaccurate. Since, however, these notes do contain the Swami's own sentences, incomplete though they may be, she ventures to include them in this present account, in the hope that they may help to convey something of his living spirit.

The first notation is dated "Noon, August 4th, 1926."

ON SLOTH

The origin of sloth is in the mind. If mind is overcome by lethargy, then body is easily overcome. It follows the whims of the mind. We never can give up anything that we cherish, even if we know that it is bad for us, if the mind is indolent, lethargic and pleasure-loving. If the mind is given to envy, hatred or similar feelings, the body will respond. When we make our lives in accordance with the higher laws, these imperfections will drop away. We

become intent, absorbed in lofty thoughts and aspirations, and the first thing we know, we are changed. This is a great miracle in the spiritual life: we are changed without knowing it.

Steadfastness, steadfastness, steadfastness! We must remind ourselves of that. By meditating on a person who holds holy ideas, we seem to absorb some of those qualities. This is one of the most natural ways of transforming our lives.

The thought I want to give you today is: keep on! Do not be discouraged if you feel great lethargy when you start on this path. After you have taken a few steps with determination, it will gradually leave you. Hold fast! Hold fast! Hold fast!

Know this, through His grace nothing is impossible. "He can make the dumb eloquent and the lame to cross over the insurmountable mountains." Faith in that great Principle is the culmination of all wisdom. He can make all things possible.

AFTERNOON

The enjoyments which are born through contact with (sense-objects) are ever generators of misery; (they are) with beginning and end. O son of Kunti, the wise do not seek pleasure in them.

Those who are wise in their instincts do not seek their satisfaction in outer life. Pleasing sound, pleasing sight, pleasing touch — these things are trivial, and so long as we continue to seek satisfaction in them, we shall continue to have rising up and falling down on the sense plane; therefore the wise do not seek satisfaction in these things. When a person, through self-control, can make himself unshakable, that person has really become a saint. That person is esteemed — is happy and is stable.

Titiksha, endurance. Some people practise this. Our body has great power of endurance. We can make it impervious to almost anything, and also we can make it like a whimpering child. What is true of the flesh is also true of the mind. If the mind is withdrawn as much as possible from the body, the body does not feel so much. The highest achievement in this line comes when the mind is put in tune with the spiritual essence. This is done involuntarily. Once we have found our contact with the highest, things of a lower order soon make their adjustment.

He who can withstand the impulse of lust and anger, even here (in this life), before he is separated from the body, is steadfast and truly a happy man.

This is a beautiful passage from the Bhagavad-Gita. A person cannot give up outer things till he finds something within. When our hearts are filled with grace of God, nothing can force an entrance. That is why the really great souls do not bother about evil. They let it alone.

The self-subjugated Rishis (Truth-seers), whose impurities are washed off, whose doubts are destroyed, and who are engaged in doing good to all beings, attain supreme liberation.

The Rishis, the pure aspiring souls, attain that highest bliss of *Brahman* when all their sins are exhausted. Sin is a word synonymous with selfishness. Selfishness is the only logical explanation of what the world calls sin. It brings contraction; it brings a veil. The reverse also is true. Even people who know nothing of spiritual things, when they do something for others, their act produces a fragrance, and in times of trouble that fragrance helps them . . . *the meditative man, having mastered the senses,*

mind and intellect, being freed from desire, fear and anger, and regarding freedom as his supreme goal, is liberated forever.

Knowing Me to be the receiver and dispenser of Yajna (sacrifice) and austerity, the Supreme Lord of the Universe and the Friend of all beings, he attains to peace.

Peace, in the strict sense, is born of meditation, and meditation is that which brings us close to the heart of the universe, which is right within us. Finding our contact with our inmost being, we find contact with the universe. Kingdom of heaven is within. One who has withdrawn from outer things, he finds his pleasure within, his satisfaction within. A new world opens before him.

We are not able to meditate strenuously every minute. It is not good for us to do that. All the wise spiritual teachers teach their disciples to do things naturally. They place each man where he can express his gifts in the most natural way. By this means he ascends to the highest. We must find a practical application for our ideals. Then they become very helpful and beautiful.

When the "self-subjugated Rishis" attain that blissful state, how do they express it? What is to be their contribution? They express it by doing good to others. And what is this "doing good to others?" It is to have the light within and the power of sharing that light. When the inner life is established, we cannot help doing good to all with whom we come in contact. It becomes the passion of the soul. The sign of one who has really attained is this burning desire to do good to all men. The smaller the soul, the greater is his hankering after petty pleasures. In the animal kingdom, the animals quarrel over food, etc., but as man rises in the scale, he becomes less and less inclined to follow these lower tendencies.

The blending of inner and outer is the great objective in spiritual life. This blending is so wonderful that the truly illumined teachers never fail to train their disciples in the practical side of things, the balanced side; because man must never lose his sense of balance.

One of the rules laid down in *Raja Yoga* is the non-receiving of gifts. It is a very fine principle, but its practice requires a tremendous amount of wisdom. We cannot take it literally. Whenever we receive anything from anyone, at the same time, we receive a certain part of that person. It opens the entire realm of Karmic ties. This injunction is specially given to those people who have taken up the spiritual life. Only those have the right to receive who have eliminated all sense of self-consciousness. Giving to them is like placing a gift on the altar, like giving to God. This is because they have no sense of "I." Everything depends upon the mental attitude. If you receive something and immediately you think, "This can bring help to someone!" then that gift becomes a great blessing.

As a general rule, it is much better for a person to have an independent spirit. It is the understanding of the Law that gives knowledge of how to help a person so that he may not again fall into error. But there must never be coldness. Spirituality is not a cut and dried thing. Without feeling we can never accomplish anything. People become tired and suffocated, going round and round the little self.

No man can choose what coming hours may bring
To him of need, of joy, of suffering;
But what his soul shall bring into each hour
To meet its challenge—this is in his power.

REPORT

VEDANTA CENTRE - ANANDA ASHRAMA, COHASSET, MASSACHUSETTS

The summer continues to be a productive one for the Vedanta Centre, now fully operating in its woodland setting. Srimati Gayatri Devi's return from India in June brought in its train new life which at times has kept the small-sized resident community in rapid pace. Many visitors, primarily Vedanta students, come and go, spending their vacations at the Ashrama which offers not only rest and recreation away from the world, but stimulus to high thinking and opportunity for spiritual practices through the established program of daily worship, study and meditation. The Sunday morning service and the afternoon's informal worship, either in the Nature Sanctuary of pines or upon the high rocks, invite the public to share in an experience uncommon in its atmosphere of serenity.

The play of the wild life at this Retreat constitutes a story worth mentioning. It provides a form of enjoyment which is steadily becoming a part of the Ashrama members' everyday existence. When human eyes are turned away, rabbits choose to steal tender zinnia plants or bright faced pansies from the garden in preference to the grass or profusive green vegetation nearby. So tame had they become! Squirrels sit noiselessly on the trees displaying their handsome tail-plumage while the community sings the evening hymn to Divine Mother. And birds come and beg sunflower seeds and eat out of stretched hands, without timidity or fear. One Sunday while Gayatri Devi was in the midst of delivering the sermon, two chickadees perched on the big trunk of a pine near which sat Brother Richard and asked for food, only to be disappointed. A little girl among the several chil-

dren, who had stayed at the Ashrama guest house, reported that one day she had one hundred and five visits from chickadees during the afternoon.

Three special observances highlighted the summer's activities, all stirring fresh enthusiasm and interest in the work of the Vedanta Centre. June 21st was a day marked with deeper consecration in memory of Swami Paramananda's liberation. July 4th sounded the music in silence, kept for three hours in honor of Swami Vivekananda's freedom from mortal existence. August 15th became sacred in remembrance of the Great Master Sri Ramakrishna's entering into final Mahasamadhi. On the following day, Sunday the 16th, the 24th anniversary of the Ashrama was commemorated. On all these occasions the place vibrated with life as many people attended the services, remained for dinners and enjoyed happy fellowship.

Mr. Kenneth L. Patton, Minister of the Universalist Meeting House gave a stimulating discourse on "Man in Nature" at the afternoon function celebrating the anniversary.

SERVICE IN BOSTON

Only once a week Vedanta Centre meets in the city, where Gayatri Devi conducts a class on the Upanishads. The location now is a room at Boston's historic Universalist Meeting House on 70 Charles Street. Sometime in September a Library and Reading Room will be opened at the same address and later in season a Sunday service will be held there.

Further details concerning the Vedanta activities at the Ananda Ashrama Cohasset and in Boston will be found inside the front cover of this issue.

INCEPTION OF NEW VEDANTA SOCIETY,
FRANKFURT, GERMANY

Seven months of absence from the Vedanta Centre were for its leader, Srimati Gayatri Devi, a time of pilgrimage and travel. On her way to India on November 1, 1952, she stopped, at the request of an interested group, in Frankfurt am Main in Germany to form a Vedanta Society. Srimati addressed the German students of Vedanta on three different occasions during her four-day visit, the main lecture on "Many Aspects of Vedanta" being held in a large room of Frankfurt's Chamber of Commerce Building. Besides, a devotional Service was conducted before a small and intimate gathering on Sunday morning, November 23rd. As only a minority of listeners spoke and understood English, all the talks were translated into German. Dr. Gunter Zuhlsdorf, who will lead the group in Gayatri Devi's absence, interchanged with Mr. Kurt Friedrichs as interpreter.

On the return journey Gayatri Devi was again in Frankfurt between May 23rd and 25th, 1953, during which time she delivered two addresses. The second lecture included many of Srimati's experiences of the Indian travel.

The chief activity of the Society at Frankfurt am Main is at present, the publication of a quarterly magazine, "Geistiges Leben" or Spiritual Life, which contains German translations and philosophic writings primarily by noted persons. Some of our Vedanta Literature is already in German print, such as "Principles and Purpose of Vedanta," "Power of Thought," "Reincarnation and Immortality," by Swami Paramananda and others are rapidly coming out of press. This we feel will be welcomed by our German readers in America.

INDIA, THE LAND OF PILGRIMAGE

While on the sacred soil of India, Gayatri Devi became a pilgrim, swiftly moving from place to place in order to worship at the ancient shrines and gain first hand knowledge of the people and their activities along spiritual lines, as well as to see some of the modern religious organizations which are engaged in constructive work. The journey through the mainland covered a distance of eight thousand miles from all four geographical points. The pilgrimage included most of the famous Temples such as at Benares, Vrindavan, Bodh Gaya, Madras, Madura, Rameswaram, Trivandrum, Mysore, Ajanta, Ellora, Amritsar and others. Among the many religio-educational institutions Srimati visited Divine Life Society at Hrishikesh, Dera Baba Jaimalji in Beas and Gurukul school of Kankhal in the north, Mahatma Gandhi's Ashrama at Wardha Sevagram in the central province, Sri Aurobindo Ashram in the south, Shantiniketan, Tagore's international university and Ashrama in the east, and twenty or more Ramakrishna Monastery and Mission Centres all over the country.

LECTURES AT VARIOUS PLACES

After nearly eighteen years of absence, Gayatri Devi delivered her first lecture in India at New Delhi under the auspices of Kalibari, an association around the Temple of Kali, in November, 1952. Swami Ranganathananda, the head of Ramakrishna Mission Centre at India's Capital city, presided. The theme was "India's Service to America." Again before her departure for the United States, Srimati spoke at New Delhi Constitution Club on "Where India and America Meet," under the sponsorship of Indian Cultural Association.

The Lady Irwin School, Sarada Mahila Samiti, Bengali Women's Organization and Cambridge School for Boys were some of the groups that received her most cordially and before which Gayatri Devi spoke either in English or Bengali, her mother tongue.

Visva Bharati Students Union, Bolepur High School, the Community at Phulia, Talime Sangh of Wardha, Sarada Girls School of Madras, Dhanbad Rotary Club also welcomed Gayatri Devi as a guest speaker who at every opportunity stressed the need of understanding between India and America.

ANANDA ASHRAMA, LA CRESCENTA, CALIFORNIA

Ananda Ashrama California celebrated Lord Buddha's Birthday on Thursday night, the 28th of May. A Buddha Shrine was made in the Temple portico, with candles, one white lily and great boughs of greenery forming the setting for the large carved image of the Lord, Gautama Buddha. The Service on this occasion was an especially beautiful and moving one.

Memorial Day was observed very quietly by the members of the Ashrama on Saturday, and on Sunday, the 31st of May, the Public Services were dedicated not to death and the dead, but rather to the shining, vibrant qualities of existence, to the Spirit of man that knows only Life.

Summer began with the observance of the passing of Swami Paramananda on the 21st of June. It was a day of warm and joyous remembrance of the one who made the dream of Ananda Ashrama and all its multiple blessings a living reality, for "the good of many and the happiness of many."

On the 4th of July another day of Great Liberation

was commemorated, that of the powerful Swami Vivekananda, the great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

On Friday night, the 31st of July a concert was given for the benefit of the Indian work of Charushila Devi, a history of whose school appears in the last issue of the *Message of the East*. The artists were Mrs. Rebecca Grimes and her daughters, Elena and Gloria, whose annual concert is always awaited with eagerness. Mrs. Grimes, pianist, and Elena, violinist, gave excellent interpretations of two sonatas for violin and piano from the works of Mozart and Grieg. The youngest member of the Grimes family, Miss Gloria, a fine soprano, sang for the first time at Ananda Ashrama, filling the gap caused by the absence of Alta, gifted cellist and old time friend, who this summer is in the east with her husband. The evening was a real success both artistically and financially. The Ashrama is deeply grateful to Mrs. Grimes and her daughters and to all whose efforts and contributions made possible this offering to the valiant sister across the sea.

Again on the 25th of August a concert was given at the Community House, Mr. Rudolph Gruen this time being the artist. Mr. Gruen, whose recital last year created so much enthusiasm among Ashrama's music lovers, is a distinguished pianist and composer. It was a brilliant performance thoroughly enjoyed by all. At the close of the evening, refreshments were served.

NOTE

We wish to draw our readers' attention to a Vedanta publication, *Self Knowledge*, published by Hari Prasad Shastri, Shanti Sadan, 29 Chepstow Villas, London, W., England. This periodical is deeply spiritual as well as of a high literary quality. We recommend it.